My Son

(Continued)

III.

—I am better —said Evangeline to me.

—I see!... but what are you doing now?

—I am getting up. I can not remain any longer in bed...

I gently restrained her; I arranged the pillows under her head. I drew the covering up to her chin, I carefully tucked it on both sides of her face, then I paused for a moment to contemplate my work in silence.

Evangeline permitted me to do so without resistance, because it pleased her to enjoy the spectacle of my caressing gravity; but when she saw me standing erect and immovable before her, she first begged me not to look at her in that fashion, then she resumed that she absolutely would not remain in bed, that she felt very well; and as I still restrained her, she turned her back on me with the disrespectful air of a spoiled child; but soon she turned to me smiling.

Then I said to her with an air of great seriousness.

—It is not proper to commit follies the vain time of frivolities has passed it will returne no more; we become sensible and think of the family.

—Hear him—cried Evangeline—the vain time when we were lovers has passed, it will never return again, this frivolous time when Monsieur never had any thought but to please me.

—Cease —I said to her in a low voice —cease; it is not right to jest about that; we should not defy the end. You know very well how much I love you, and did you not say yourself that you seem to love me more now, that there are two of you to love me?

Evangeline remaind silent for an instant, smiling; then she said to me tranquilly:

—Love him; yes, love him; I will not be jealous.

Her thoughts were elsewhere, but mine ran on a walk out into the country.

At this moment our servant brought the coffee; we glanced at each other, and we gravely took the beverage; and not a word escaped us till our stupid magpie of a servant prepared to returned to the kitchen.

—Will you please wait little longer my wife said to her —My husband wishes to go out for a little while, I am not very well and I do not wish to remain alone.

What is the matter with you?—asked the servant.

—I have a slight lumbago; it is nothing.

—My dear wife has lumbago—cried I when we were alone —how well you know how to tell fibs!

Have not I done right possibly? If I had told the truth to that chatterer, within a quarter of an hour would not all the house from cellar to garret, every one commencing with the doctor's horse and ending with the sparrows on the roof know.....?

—You have done right; it is necessary, on the contrary, to keep our happiness hidden; it will seem all the more our own; no living soul shall know it, not even your father ...

—And why not my father?

—Oh, well; your father then, but he alone; —Why did you say that Monsieur wished to go out?—I asked her.

—Well.. I spoke without thinking ...it seemed to me....

—You send me out—said I—confess that it is you who wish to be alone—I am going.

And I took this pretext, so as not to confess that I myself felt a pressing need to go out and be alone with my thoughts,—but then I was hardly able to decide to leave my precious sick one alone.

—I am going; I said.

—Wait.....and now go, and think of me all the time.

There where I put so many points one with understand that I left out kisses.

—Always of you—responded I, and I hastened with that heedless mixture of joy and regrets which a married man feels who hastens to a feast, leaving his wife at home.

IV.

I decended the stair in bounds, like a boy, under the startled eyes of a roomer on the second floor who was just leaving the house himself, and who clung to the bannisters to escape the avalanche of my descent.

At the street door I stopped like one who had lost his memory. I looked to the right and to the left, probably to decide which way to direct my steps, but I was not conscious of it, and when the roomer on the second floor whom I had left behind had rejoined me, and, giving me a rapid glance of investigation, had turned toward the bastion, I followed, and again passed him.

What the deuce was running in my head I did not know, but it was many things at once; among other things an indistinct idea presented itself continually, and this was I had left the house and that I had descended precipitately into the street to meet some one whom I could not find.

Who could it be? I did not know, but it seemed in truth that some one had failed me; and at the first corner of the street I suddenly stopped to look this way and that.

I noticed in an absent minded fashion that the roomer on the second floor, who had joined me for the second time, felt that it was his duty gaze at him with eyes full of reproach after which he walked rapidly away with a suspicious expression on his face, from which I gathered that it was not he who had by his heedlessness brought about the disaster of our three meeting in three minutes.

—Poor fellow! —thought I.

Nothing more. But I felt tempted to overtake him, to take his arm in mine, to draw him with me, despite his resistance, along the luminous ways of my joy; however, I did not budge, and I let him disappear, pale as a ghost.

All at once I felt myself clasped by the legs; from the cloud where my thoughts had flown, I lowered my eyes to my feet — and I saw there what I had sough: a dear little bare-footed baby, its shoulders nude, its face laughing.

All became clear! if I had descended the stairs precipitately, it was because I felt the secret need to bring a caress to this baby; and if I had passed twice in front of the roomer on the second floor, I had certainly done so withou thinking, because it seemed to me that no one could leave his house with any other end in view, and that I wished to be the first to take in my arms this little man who waited at the corner of the street.

I took him, I kissed him, and I wished to know of him if he loved me; and he, repeating his first lesson, responded that he loved me "as much as that." This was not a little, because in saying it he reached out his little arms as if he wished to touch the two ends of the horizon.

Though it may provoke the philosophers, those who run after the verities, yet I say that this little pleasantry from these little lips made me happier than their truest teaching.

I looked around me; there was not a soul in sight who lived on this street and the child smiled at me: this tempted me to hide it under my jacket and steal it.... but, as if to prevent the crime, there appeared from a neighboring shop the joyous head of a gentle little mother who had seen all.

She called in a tone which did not know how to be severe, one or two times:- Emille. Emille!

But my little Emille did not budge; he fixed his astonished eyes on one of the buttons of my coat which were of cut glass, and which appeared to him to be a brilliant of the first water.

Then the mother arose, crossed the street, came to me and took the child in her arms, saying:

—It is mine.

And adding some words of excuse which I did not hear, she went away with her treasure.

I walked on, my hands empty, but my heart full of an unusual sweetness and my soul swaying in the whirl of new thoughts. And, unfading in the midst of a crowd of still indistinct images, stood a smiling woman, the mother of that instant, who repeated to me with sweet assurance:

—It is mine!

Then I gazed into the blue sky and, from some floating clouds, I formed the features of a little creature of paradise, impatient to come into the world, and I said with a resolute air:

—It is mine!

I felt its presence, I had it at my side, or it seemed to go before me with all the little caressing manners of infancy, but it was certainly there to give me kisses which seemed exhaled from the soft breezes of this May morning.

Thus I dreamed; but all at once it seemed to me that I felt myself abandoned, and I said, half to myself:

—Now it has run home so as not to make the mother jealous; it will return soon.

And I waited, truly, planted in the middle of the street and holding my face for its caresses.

One need not be a poet in order to have such fancies; it is permitted as well to advocates without a clientage, as you see. This, which does not seem true to you now, comes true when old age, the experience of years and mature sense enable you to see better how to recall to yourself the dear extravagances of a certain time. Today I am sixty years old (this is not much; no, this is not much) and I commence to dream as then (but now without waiting for anyone; they have come a long time ago!) and I say that there are sentiments which are true for a quarter of an hour of one's life only, and it is necessary but to recall one after having forgotten them all, to realize that much which we treat as extravagant is most often quite simple and and natural.

Today I am sixty years old, and that does not seem much to me; the day that I marched along this street with an agitated step, my head erect demanding kisses of the wind and interrogating nature, that day I was hardly twenty five,. and that appeared too much,

I looked back at all of my past life with a glance of pity, and I reproached myself for having lost all my youth, because in all of it I could recall neither a thought nor a sentiment worthy of my present state.

—I have been blind till within the past half hour —said I —I have passed my youth groping in the darkness; my son has had pity on me and has raised the bandage, but as for me, I have never lifted a finger to remove it from my eyes. I have acted the cynic by vice, the indolent by habit; I have passed my examination as doctor of laws by necessity and I have married by imitation, and the thought which occupies me entirely today is that I have had and that I have done nothing to render me worthy of my new mission. If it be true that we risk the danger of seeing all the actions, good or bad committed in our youth repeated in our children, what evils I risk seeing in my poor little one yet to be born! ah! it merits a better father!

But while thus reproaching myself and uttering lamentations, I was astonished at not feeling the least trace of remorse or discouragement: on the contrary I was content, I was satisfied with myself. Generous and happy father, I absolved myself from all the faults of my youth.

And if ever there were a day when I had a supreme opinion of my worth, it was not the day, so dreaded, when I submitted victoriously to the proof of an examinattion in common law at the University at Pavie, nor the other, so memorable, when the immense gown and the imposing title of doctor of laws were confered upon me, nor the other, where before the magistrate, I obtained my Evengeline for evermore; the highest sense of worth, I had it the day only when I felt that I was to be a father.

It seemed to me that it was but necessary to glance at me to see my grandeur. And when, in these solitary paths, the haunts of lovers and idlers, there where it seemed that one would not wish to walk save with slow steps, some one turned to regard this superb father who walked so proudly, and with head so erect, then I felt flattered as by an encomium offered to my secret triumph.

To be continued.

An Insect Tragedy.

There is something really pathetic in the way a mother butterfly builds a nest for her children. In the first place, the little home where the eggs are deposited represents a great deal of sacrifice, for it is lined with several layers of down plucked from the mother's own soft body. The eggs having been laid carefully upon this luxurious, pretty couch are protected by an equally pretty coverlet made of the same material.

These butterfly bedclothes are often arranged with an intricacy that is quite curious and perplexing. Sometimes a bed is made so that each separate delicate hair stands upright, thus giving the entire nest the appearance of a little brush of downy fur. Then again, the eggs are laid spirally round a tiny branch, and, as the covering follows their course, the effect resembles the busy tail of a fox, only the nest is more beautiful than the "brush" of the finest fox that ever roamed over country.

The building of this downy nest is the latest earthly labor of the mother butterfly, for by the time it is completed her own delicate body is denuded of its natural covering, and there is nothing left for her to do but die, a sacrifice which she promptly and heroically makes in the interest of the coming butterfly generation.

Some Odd Names.

The most suggestive and inviting name I saw was that of a druggist in North Dakota. It was U. R. Welcome, his first name being Urias. Across the street was another man with a funny name. He bore the euphonious cognomen John Stonepounder. In the next town I found a man who was so fat that the name of Abraham Crumpacker seemed especially fitting. But there was a woman in the town who went him one better. Her name was Emily Freshbread.

In the next town I got so interested in queer names that I soon heard of a speedy individual called Sarah Deerhoof. In that same town there is a man named Henry Bookstruck. Ever after that I was on the lookout. On the train I met David Newsalt and Millie Newlove. The man with the most warlike name I ran against was Abraham Saltpeter. In one town I found a man who had a very poetic name. It was Seabright Sunbloom. But the last name I struck finished me. It seemed like a direct command to cease my sacrilegious monkeying with people's names. I took it as a warning and quit. A. Quickfinish. And what do you suppose his partner's name was? It was W. K. Goforth.—St. Paul Dispatch.

An Intelligent Censor.

No play may be publicly performed in England until it has been passed upon and agreed to by the stage censor. A certificate must be secured from the lord chamberlain. The lord chamberlain himself does not, of course, read all the plays submitted to him, but the work is passed on to the examiner of plays, who is not always a man of education or discretion and who in many cases has been suspected of letting things pass because managers have made it profitable to him to close his eyes to supposed faults.

The story is told of one of these examiners who was moved to strike out "drunk as a lord" in one of the plays submitted to him. There used to be an old rule that the word "heaven" should be substituted in stage lines wherever the name of any of the persons of the Trinity came up. So this clever examiner changed the line to read "as drunk as a heaven."

The penalty for disobeying the examiner is a fine of $250, which may be levied on any person connected with the forbidden performance—callboy as well as star.

His Experience.

"Woman's work is never done," quoted the sympathetic citizen.

"That's right," answered Mr. Meekton earnestly. "I have observed it in Henrietta's case. Woman's work is never done. There is always enough of it left over to keep her husband busy from the time he gets through dinner till he's so tired he has to go to bed."—Washington Star.

A Dangerous Associate.

"Sir, the men on the firing line refuse to go out again if Private Pineknot goes with 'em."

"What's the matter with the private?"

"He used to hunt deer up in Maine, sir, and the other men are afraid for their lives."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

SAW THE FURNACE.

But the Result of the Inspection Was Very Unsatisfactory.

The host looked at his guest.

"Come down in the basement," he said, with a slight wink. "I want to show you my furnace."

The hostess glanced up, with a queer little smile.

"Mr. Stiverson is quite daft about his furnace, Mr. Jollyboy," she said, "I've no doubt he'll have you down there every time he opens a damper."

The host turned away and choked slightly, and then they stepped down the stairs together.

Mr. Stiverson went straight to the furnace room and, reaching above the bricked in heater, pulled down a squat black bottle and a small glass. He filled the latter.

"Here's to the furnace," he said, with a hoarse chuckle, as he passed the glass to his guest. "Have to be a little careful, you know, on account of the old lady. Best woman in the world, of course, but prejudiced. How's that?" The guest gulped and took down the contents of the glass. "Now, what would you call that?"

"Well," replied the visitor, with a horrible grimace, "to be frank with you, I would call it a mighty good sample of spoiled cider vinegar."

"Eh! What?" And the host hastily poured out a glass and took a mouthful. "Wow-w-w! So it is. Hang it all, the old lady has discovered the hiding place! Wonder what in thunder she did with the real stuff? Heavens! What a contemptible trick! Let's go up stairs." *Allí* they went.

"How did Mr. Jollyboy like the furnace?" inquired the hostess as she looked up, with a pleasant smile.

The scidulated guest did his best to call up a smile in return.

"It's a splendid furnish—I should say furnace," he remarked. "I don't think I ever saw one with better appointments outside and inside."

"And on top, too?" queried the hostess sweetly. Then she pointed to the open register at her feet.

"It's quite wonderful," she added, "how distinctly the sound of voices in the furnace room below comes up through the register. I could hear every word you said!"

Then she laughed softly.

But the men made no comment.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

His Literary Routine.

An author filled out as follows a question blank from one of the literary review syndicates recently:

"Do you burn the midnight oil?"

"Yes—when the gas bill's due."

"What time do you rise?"

"Whenever the bill collector knocks."

"What is your daily exercise?"

"Climbing trees to avoid the bailiff."

"When do you dine?"

"Whenever I can."

"What is your chief study?"

"How to pay the rent, appease the butcher, comfort the baker, silence the groceryman and settle the gas bill!"—Atlanta Constitution.

An Inimical Rumor.

"Did you say that I scattered money right and left in my campaign?" asked Senator Sorghum.

"No, sir."

"Well, somebody said it, and it was a mighty mean trick. The first thing I know they'll have the people who were going to vote for me anyhow thinking it's a sheer waste of money to go up to the polls and cast an honest ballot."—Washington Star.

And He Looked It.

Auntie—What! You don't mean to say all those boys are waiting to take you to school?

Elsie—Oh, no! One of them don't go to our school.—New York Journal.

A Bargain Offered.

Editor—Well, young woman, if the story suits me, I will pay you $15 for it.

Young Lady Author (persuasively)—Oh, come, now. Buy it without reading it, and I'll let you have it for $10.—Brooklyn Life.

Polite.

Head Waiter—Shall I send a waiter to wait on you, sir?

Guest (who has been waiting in vain for 30 minutes)—I am compelled to request this extreme privilege even though I know it disturbs your system.—Life.

Needless Adjectives.

Little Willie—Say, pa, what's a redundancy of expression?

Pa—Using more words than are necessary to express one's meaning, such as "wealthy iceman," "wealthy plumber," etc.—Chicago News.

Wonders of Phrenology.

Phrenologist (delightedly)—My friend, you were born to command. Are you a soldier?

Dignified Stranger—No, sor. Oi'm a janitor.—New York Weekly.

Final Test.

"No," said the great author regretfully; "I have not reached the pinnacle of success yet. No one has yet accused me of plagiarizing a long forgotten work."—Chicago Post.

Health Note.

Mr. Stubb (reading)—"The sturdy Boers slept on their arms."

Mrs. Stubb—How injurious, John. They should sleep on their right side—Chicago News.